

AXPONA 2026 Summary Event

Review by David Das

I had the pleasure of attending the AXPONA 2026 Summary Event on April 22nd, 2026 at the Faith Lutheran Church.

This event was hosted by Club President **John Harvell**.



John rolled out his own speakers that he keeps stored inside one of the hall closets.

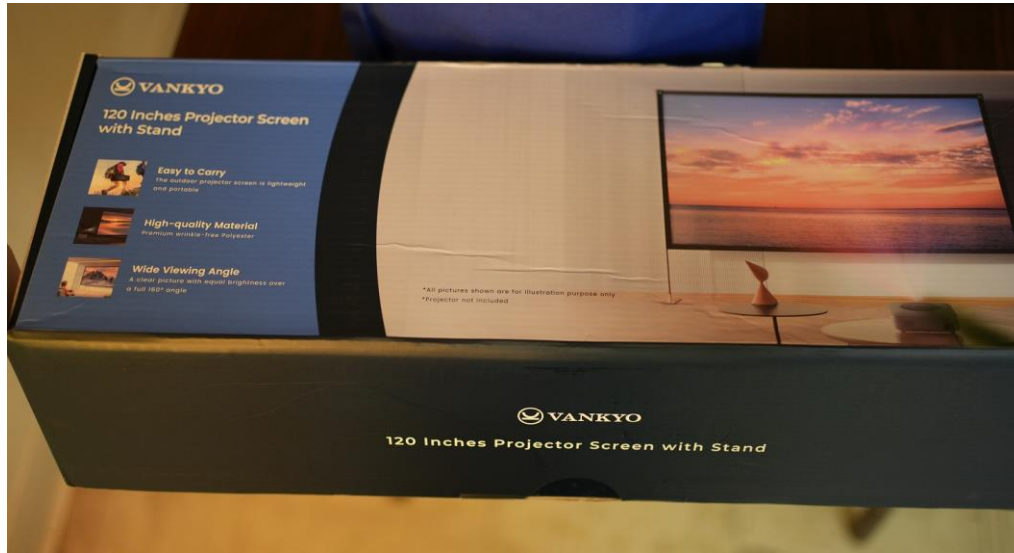
Club member **Paul Zidel** was kind enough to provide a [VAVA Chroma VA-SP003](#) 4K Ultra-Short-Throw Triple Laser Projector and a [Vankyo Staytrue 120" Projector Screen](#) with Stand.

The VAVA projector was positioned below the bottom edge of the 120" screen at a short throw distance of 11". The projector supports a brightness of 2500 ANSI Lumens with a lamp life of 25,000 hours.

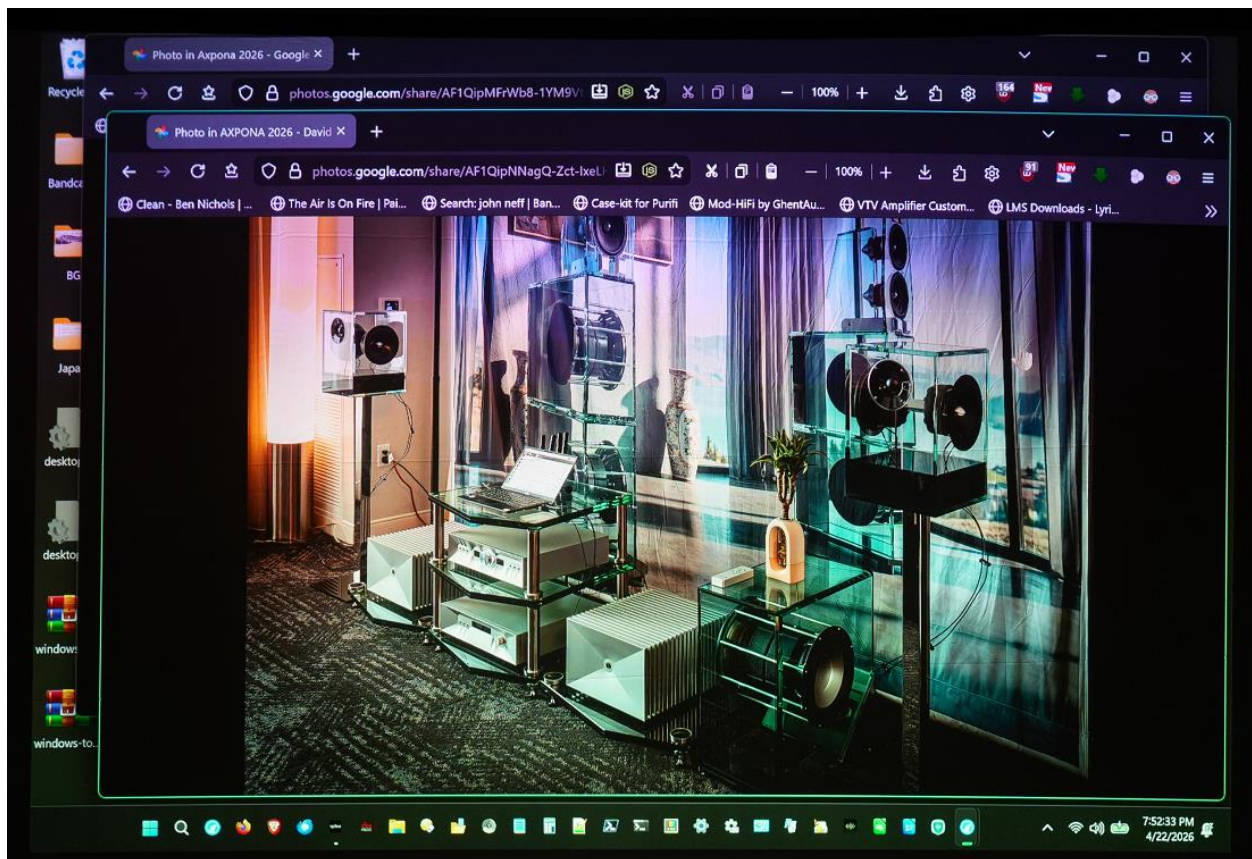
Here is a close up of the VAVA 4K Ultra Short Throw projector.

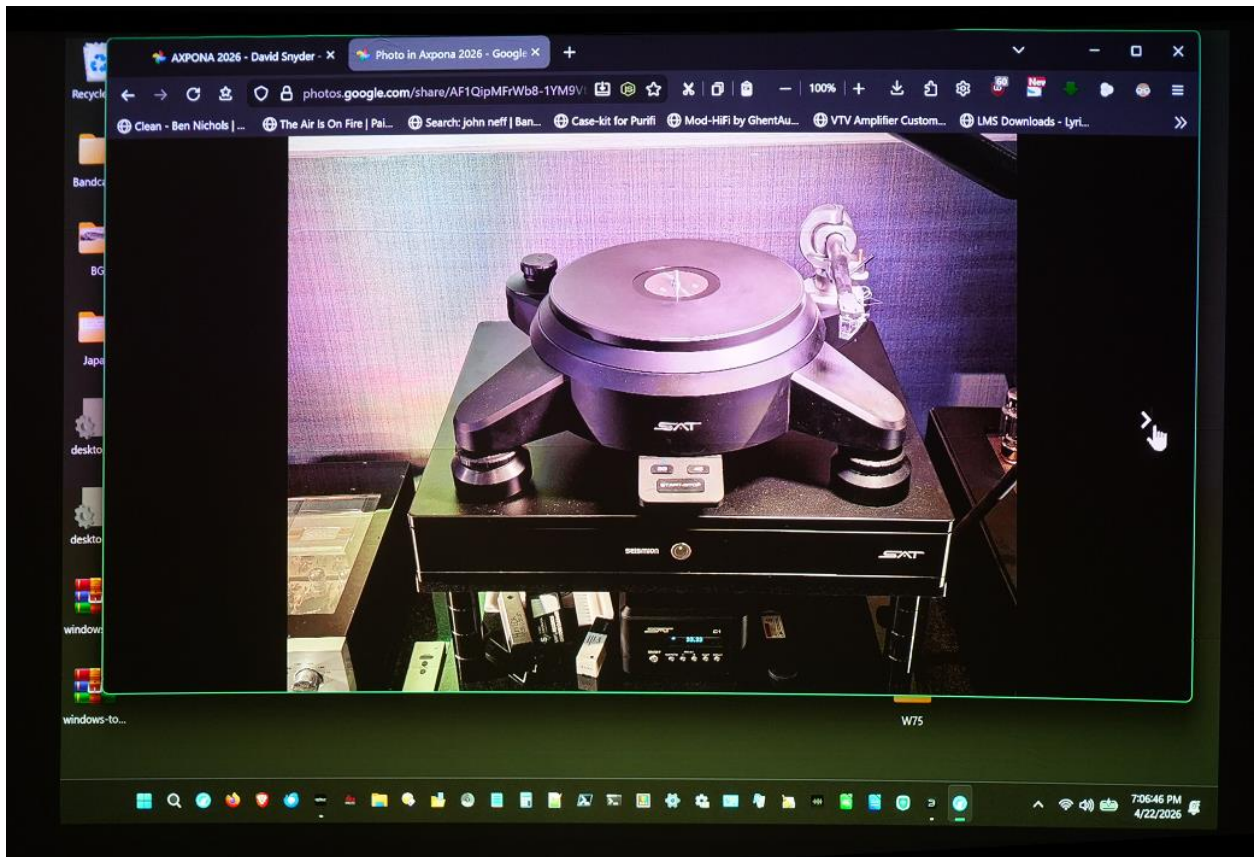
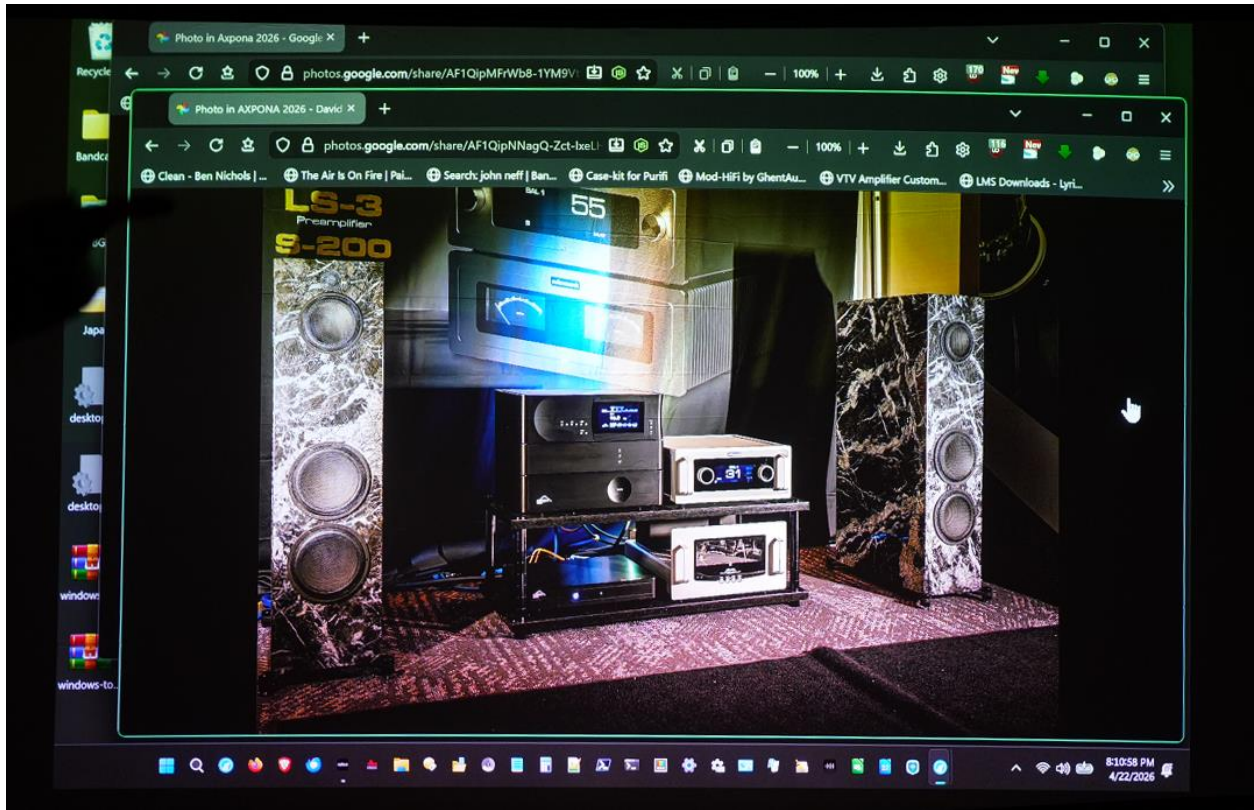


The Vankyo Projector Screen with its stand comes in a [small portable box](#) measuring 21.3" x 6.8" x 4.7" and weighing 8.76 lb. For **\$90** you get a 120" Matte White 16:9 aspect ratio screen with a wide 160 degree viewing angle.

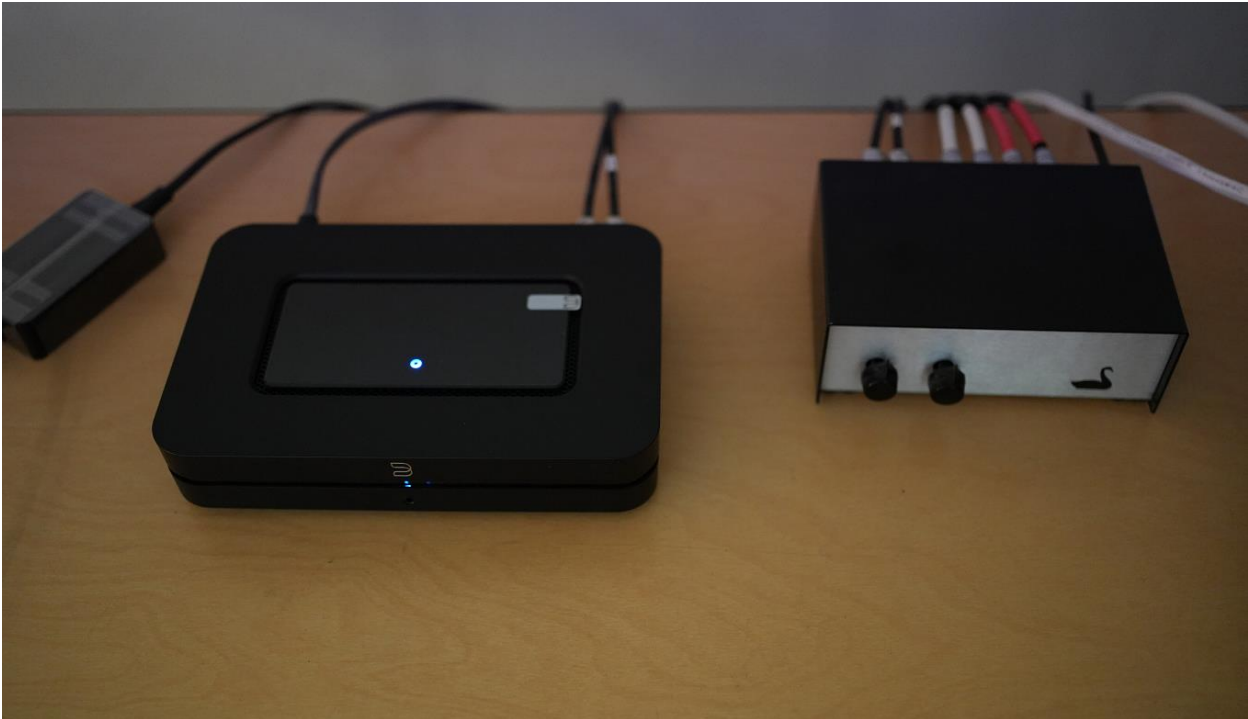


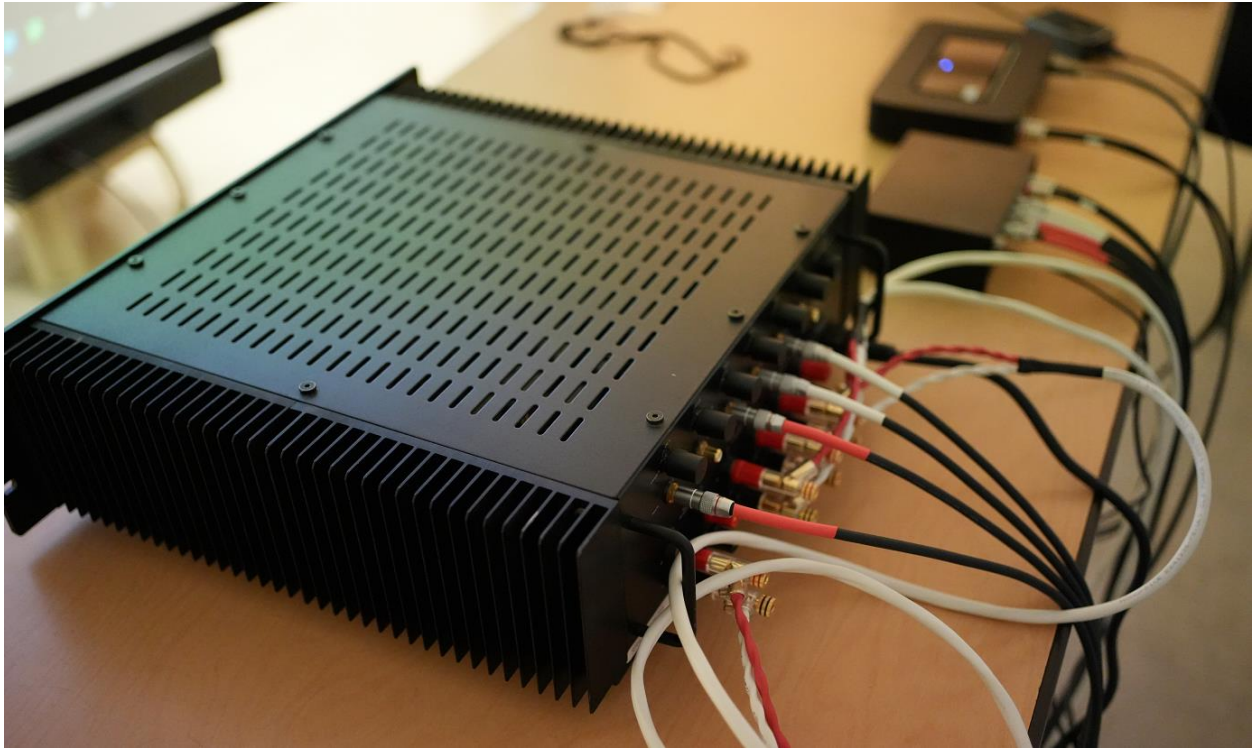
The brightness, contrast and sharpness of the projected image impressed me a lot.





Club Vice President and Treasurer **Paul Johnson** brought his [Bluesound Node](#) Music Streamer/DAC and a [Parasound HCA-806](#) High Current Multichannel Power Amp.





This is a close up of John's speakers next to Paul's 50" [Samsung PN50B650](#) 1080p Plasma HDTV.



Paul had everything wired up for the event by 7pm. The 120" projector screen was perfect for this occasion. Paul decided not to use his Samsung Plasma TV.

Club Secretary **David Snyder** attended the AXPONA 2026 event. He used his [Canon EOS R6 Mark II](#) Camera body and [Canon RF 35mm f/1.8](#) lens to capture magazine quality photos of various exhibits.

He has shared over 100 of these high resolution images on his Google Photo App:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/i928oQmiFXfz6Ji9>



David was supposed provide a running commentary on the slide show. Unfortunately, he got caught up with a work related assignment and could not make it. John decided to give an impromptu presentation using the photos taken by David. John certainly has the gift of the gab. He kept his audience engaged for the next 2 hours while conveying his personal thoughts and impressions from [AXPONA](#) 2026.

This was the largest gathering since AXPONA (Audio Expo North America) was launched in 2010 with 12,545 attendees, 750 exhibitors from 50 countries and 235 listening rooms.

The show was held at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Schaumburg, Illinois, located about 20 miles from downtown Chicago.



Exhibit hours were 10am – 6pm Friday and Saturday, and 10am – 4pm on Sunday. Attendees had a total of 22 hours to visit 235 listening rooms. That works out to less than 6 minutes per room. Obviously, it would be impossible for a single person to listen to every room.

John mentioned the best strategy was to study the Show Guide every morning and map out a game plan floor by floor to cover the most interesting exhibits.

The Renaissance Hotel has 16 floors. The listening rooms are located on floors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16. The guest rooms are located on floors 8, 9, and 10. There is no floor 13.

The hotel has only 5 elevators. The wait time to catch the elevator was way too long. The best strategy was to take the elevator from the lobby straight up to the 16th floor at the start of the day and then walk down the stairs floor by floor. Friday and Saturday were the busiest days.

If one wants to visit AXPONA for a single day, Sunday is the best choice where the crowd thins out by 2/3rds. John felt he was able to focus more and spend more time at the exhibits on Sunday. This was his sixth visit to AXPONA.

AXPONA is the second largest Hi-End Audio Show in the world after [High End Vienna](#).

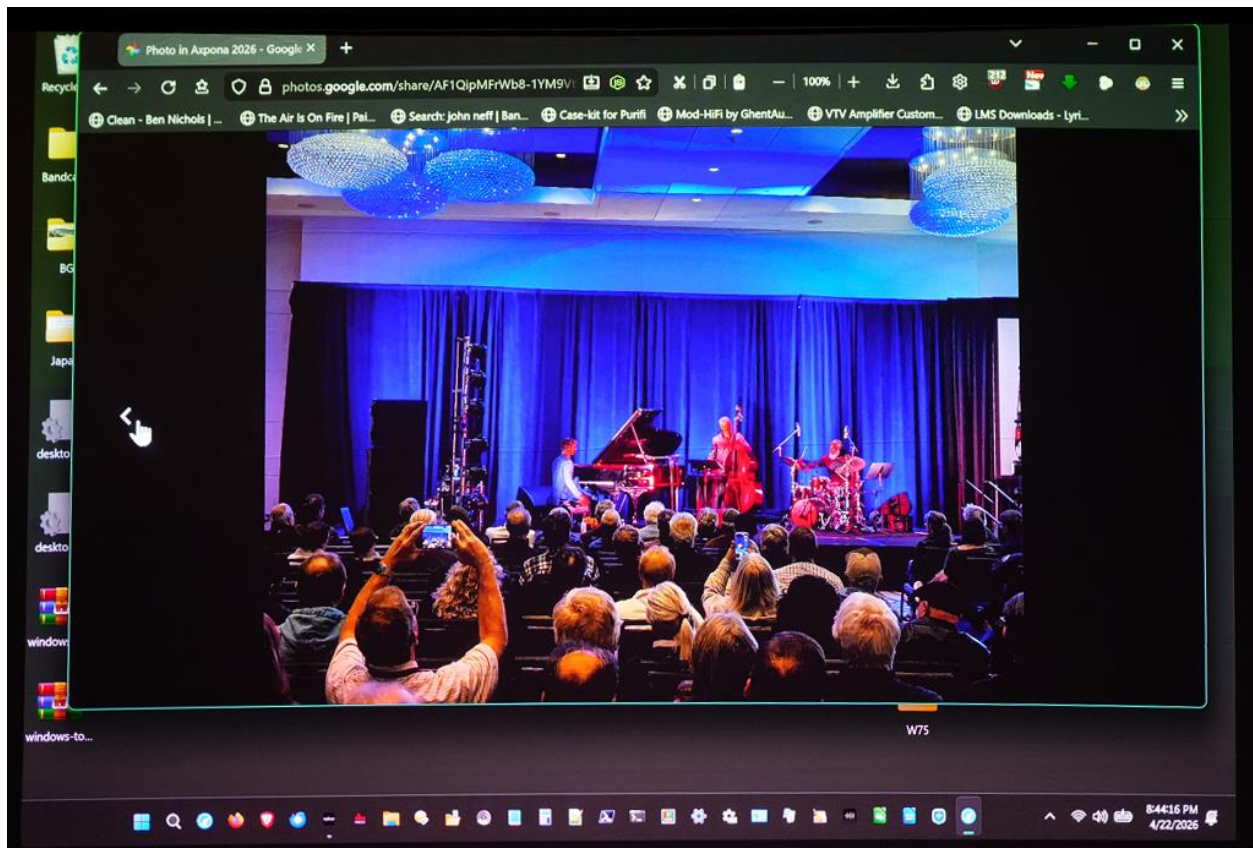
It is expensive for vendors to display their gear at AXPONA. It costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 to rent even the smallest rooms, where all the typical hotel furnishings have been taken out to make extra space. The vendors get half a day to hook up, test and tune their gear before the show opens at 10am on Friday morning.

In addition to the 235 listening rooms there was a large area dedicated to [Hi-Fi Car Audio](#). There were 50 to 80 cars on display decked out with hi-end automotive gear.

There was an entire room set up for [Headphone](#) aficionados with associated headphone amps, preamps and cables. There were some attendees who spent the entire duration of the show just evaluating somewhere between 70 to 100 different headphone setups.

There was a room just for vendors selling albums and reel-to-reel tapes. There was live music on Friday and Saturday evening in the large auditorium.

This was the Friday night concert featuring Jazz pianist [Caelan Cardello](#). He got to meet the drummer and the bassist merely two hours before show time and still managed to do a spectacular job.

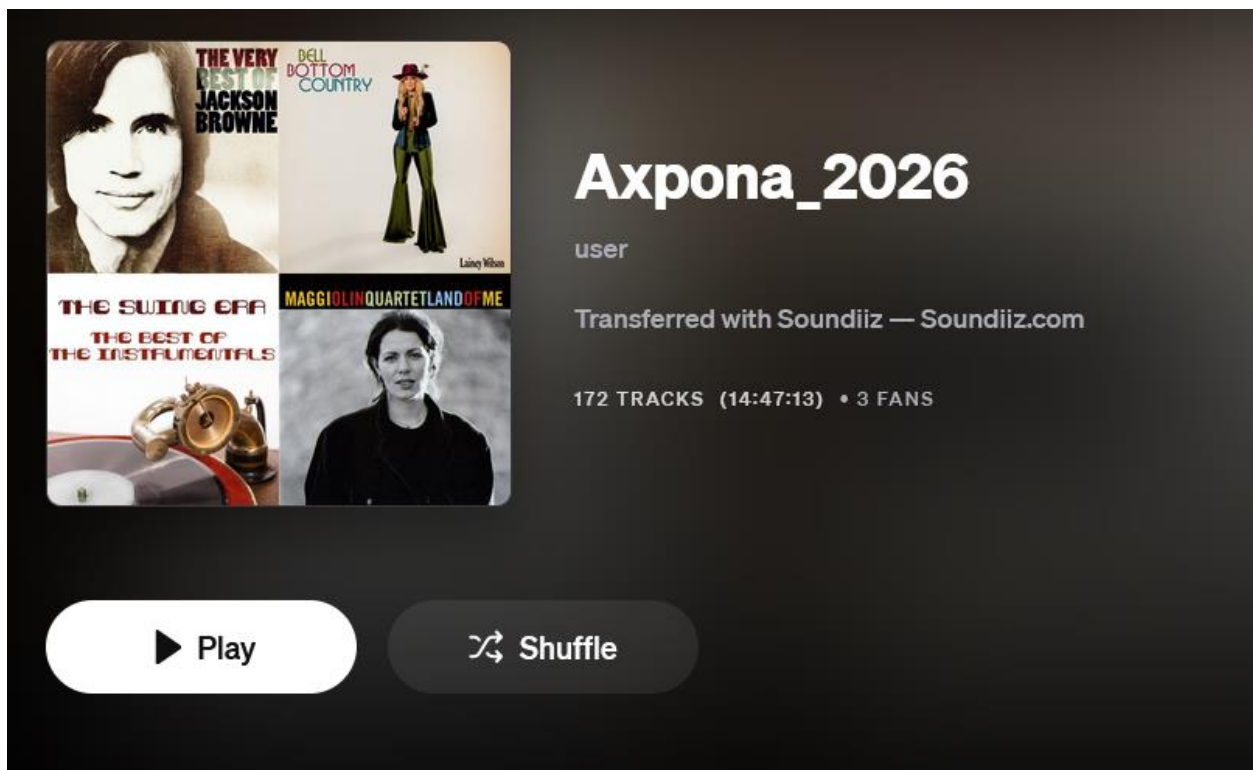


Folk/Blue Singer [Amber Rubarth](#) was featured on Saturday night.

John mentioned how his impression of a system changed from one day to another based on whether he was sitting at the sweet spot or the type of music that was being played. A brief 6 minute listening session is not enough to evaluate any piece of gear. What you get from AXPONA is the opportunity to meet with the vendors, ask questions, learn about their design architecture, establish a relationship and widen your network.














John pointed out how the quality of the source recording played a significant part in revealing the capabilities of a given system. He kept a tally of every song that he listened to at AXPONA via the [Shazam App](#). He listened to more than 200 songs at AXPONA over the course of the show.

John used [Soundiiz](#) to transfer these Shazam Song Links into a [TIDAL playlist](#).

A screenshot of a TIDAL music player interface. On the left, there is a grid of four album covers: 'The Very Best of Jackson Browne', 'Bell Bottom Country' by Lacey Wilson, 'The Swing Era: The Best of the Instrumentals', and 'Maggiolin Quartet Land of Me'. To the right of the covers, the playlist title 'Axpona_2026' is displayed in large white font, followed by 'user' in a smaller font. Below that, it says 'Transferred with Soundiiz — Soundiiz.com'. At the bottom of the playlist information, it shows '172 TRACKS (14:47:13) • 3 FANS'. At the very bottom of the interface, there are two large buttons: a white 'Play' button with a play icon and a dark grey 'Shuffle' button with a shuffle icon.

This playlist has 172 tracks with a run time of 14 hours, 47 minutes.

Although they represent less than 25% of all the music that was played at AXPONA 2026, it gives you a sampling of what the audience got to hear.

#	TITLE	ARTIST
1	 The Load Out	Jackson Browne
2	 Watermelon Moonshine	Lainey Wilson
3	 Stardust	Willie Nelson
4	 Land of Me	Maggi Olin Quartet
5	 Turn the Lights Back On	Billy Joel
6	 Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes	Paul Simon
7	 Summer Rain	Jacob Collier, Madison Cunningham,...
8	 The Summit	Avi Kaplan
9	 April	Anette Askvik
10	 when the party's over	Billie Eilish
11	 La Barrosa	Paco de Lucía
12	 Le temps passé (Live à la Cigale, 1988)	Michel Jonasz
13	 Dacoit Duel	AR Rahman
14	 The Sea	HAEVN
15	 Yillah	Hadouk Trio, Steve Shehan

Thanks a million to John Harvell for going the extra mile to share this list of audiophile tracks.

John mentioned a few systems that really stood out.

Quintessence Audio had 3 rooms on the first floor. Every one of them sounded good.





All the rooms playing Marten speakers sounded good.





The Rockport rooms all sounded good. John really liked the [Acora Acoustics](#) speakers.





John talked about the [Perfect8](#) speakers that were encased in glass enclosures.

The subwoofer has a Balanced Force design. Notice how the two midrange drivers are pointed at 90 degrees to the listener. One would assume this unusual configuration would degrade the sound, but they sounded absolutely crystal clear.

There is no damping material within the glass enclosures, yet there was no ringing, no vibration.



The [CUBE-S](#) compact reference speakers are priced at \$30,000 a pair.

The subwoofer is priced at \$20,000.

For comparison, the Martin Logan [BalancedForce 210](#) Subwoofer costs \$3,500. A couple of these would outperform the Perfect8 sub with significant savings.

John has a couple of Martin Logan BalancedForce 210 subs paired with his Martin Logan [CLX Electrostatic](#) panels. The integration is seamless. The bass is deep, tight and fast. It would be hard to outperform John's setup.

John talked about the room featuring [Dynaudio Confidence 60](#) Speakers. It was not about the speakers but about the massive diffusers on the walls that looked really artistic.



John spoke about the [Estelon Extremes](#). The upper module comprising of the diamond tweeter and Accuton midrange drivers can be height adjusted by 300mm for ideal soundstage alignment using a remote. Additionally, you can change the depth of the tweeter to achieve perfect time alignment. They were being driven by 4 [Vitus SM-1013 Mk.II](#) monoblock amplifiers in bi-amped mode. The music source was a reel-to-reel tape deck which was absolutely quiet. John felt the system had massive bass and dynamics but ultimately lacked in musicality.



After John's presentation I was curious to learn about the logistics of attending a future AXPONA event. What better person to ask for such tips than Club President John Harvell who has attended AXPONA six times?

These were John's responses to my 5 questions:

1. How much did this 4-day trip to AXPONA 2026 end up costing you?

It was approximately \$1000 for the Flights, Taxi, Uber rides, Food, Hotel, Parking, and Gasoline. Here is the detailed breakdown:

- Flights = \$266.81 + \$42.07 Seat Selection
- Hotel = \$353.67 (Shared Hotel Suite at Homewood Suites with Charles Riggio)
- Food = \$40.00/Day (estimate) 4 days = \$160.00
- Taxi to Hotel = \$45.00
- Uber to Airport = \$41.50
- Parking in Phoenix = \$84.56
- Gasoline = 3 Gallons at \$5.00/gal = \$15.00
- Multiday Event Ticket = \$60.00

Total = **\$1068.61**

2. Would you have any tips for others who may want to make it to AXPONA 2027?

They have specials on Tickets earlier in the Year. The show is so big that you need a multiday pass to have even a small chance of seeing all the rooms.

[AXPONA 2027](#) will be held next year Friday through Sunday, April 9-11 at the same hotel.

3. When is the best time to book nearby hotels?

There are multiple hotels that are reserved for show attendees. Earlier signup to these will reduce the chance of having to find a different hotel. The reserved hotels give reduced event pricing. It helps to have an Honors membership, like I have with Hilton Honors. I would fly out the day before the event (Thursday). I would try to get a later flight back on Sunday evening. Waiting to fly back on Monday just adds another day and an extra \$100 to the cost.

4. What are the best places for breakfast, lunch and dinner?

The [Homewood Suites by Hilton Chicago - Schaumburg](#) included a free breakfast with the room rent. They had a variety of items --- Scrambled Eggs (probably a substitute, Ham, Bacon, Sausage, Waffles, Oatmeal, Pastries, Dry cereal (Cheerios, etc.), Milk, Apple and Orange juice. They also provided fresh apples, oranges, and bananas. I often took some fruit with me to snack on during

the day. While I didn't buy breakfast this year... last year I really enjoyed the breakfast they offered at [Wildberry Pancakes and Café](#) – great food for a reasonable price. I didn't eat lunch while I was there but there are numerous options at the event (albeit somewhat pricey), there are many restaurants within walking distance from the Event and Hotels. Many options are available in the immediate area with prices ranging from \$15-20 to \$100-200 for those people that are more interested in higher end dining.

I ate at:

- Roti Mediterranean Bowls, Salads, and Pitas
- Red Lobster
- Café Zupas
- Outback

But there were many more options with a wide range of food available but these are where I ate.

5. Who were the Club Members besides you at AXPONA 2026?

Charles Riggio
David Snyder
David Hjortland
Joe Goswami

Mike Ware from [LMC Home Entertainment](#), John Akers a from [Cinematic Home AV](#), Jay from [Jay's Audio Lab](#), [Steve Guttenburg](#), [Michael Fremer](#), Kazuya Ohtake from [Audio&Visual Catalog](#) and many others were there.

Thanks a million to John Harvell for keeping us entertained for 2 hours with his expert commentary on AXPONA 2026. Along with the 108 slides provided by David Snyder, this was the next best thing to being there is person.

For those who wish to learn more, I would highly recommend reading through these 5 articles:

1.

[The 2026 AXPONA Show](#) by Jonathan Valin (Absolute Sound)



2.

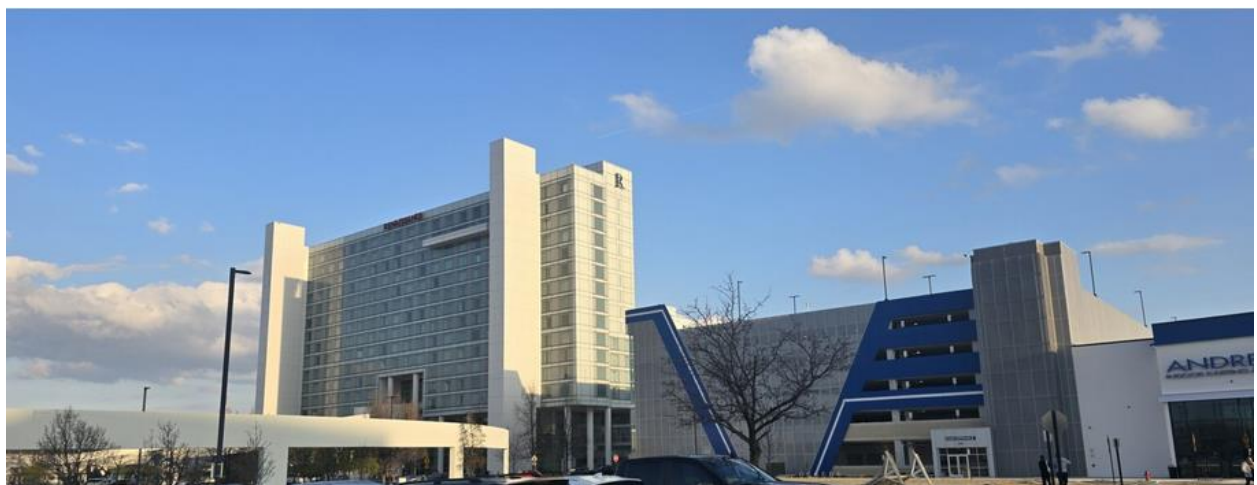
[Inside AXPONA 2026](#) by Michael Framer (Absolute Sound)



3.
[The 2026 AXPONA Show](#) by Robert Harley (Absolute Sound)



4.
[AXPONA 2026](#) by Dean Waters (Positive Feedback)



5.

[AXPONA](#) by Chuck Bruce and Steven Rochlin (Enjoy the Music)



The best video coverage of the show was presented by **Kazuya Ohtake**, editor of Audio Video Catalog.

Kazuya flew in from Tokyo, Japan to document the entire event. He captured all the videos on his [Sony A7C II](#) camera and [Sony FE PZ 16-35mm f/4 G](#) lens. He recorded the audio using the [Audio-Technical BP4025](#) stereo microphone mounted on a [Sony XLR-K3M](#) adapter kit.

Kazuya encouraged me to buy my own Sony A7C II camera and lens last year. I have been very pleased with the results.

You can read all his articles on [Audio&Visual Catalog](#).

This is Kazuya's YouTube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/@avcat_jp



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Audio Show (Hifi Show) Coverage ...more

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AXPONA 2026 Wark around
Part.2 2F [4K/60P]

1K views • 4 days ago



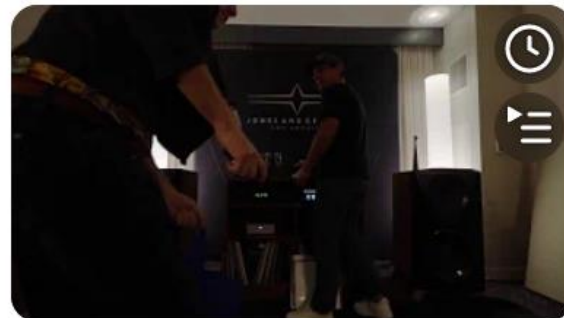
AXPONA 2026 Wark around
Part.1 1F [4K/60P]

798 views • 7 days ago



AXPONA 2026 / Audioshield /
Raidho , emmLabs , ...

390 views • 2 weeks ago



AXPONA 2026 / Jones and
Cerreta / Troubadour World ...

1K views • 2 weeks ago



The quality of his audio recordings shines through on every YouTube clip he posts. Here is an example of the deep base and clarity he captured in the Acora Acoustics room.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ss8TIikqrsW>



AXPONA 2026 / Acora Acoustics , VAC

avcat - High End Audio Coverage & Information -
3.75K subscribers



14

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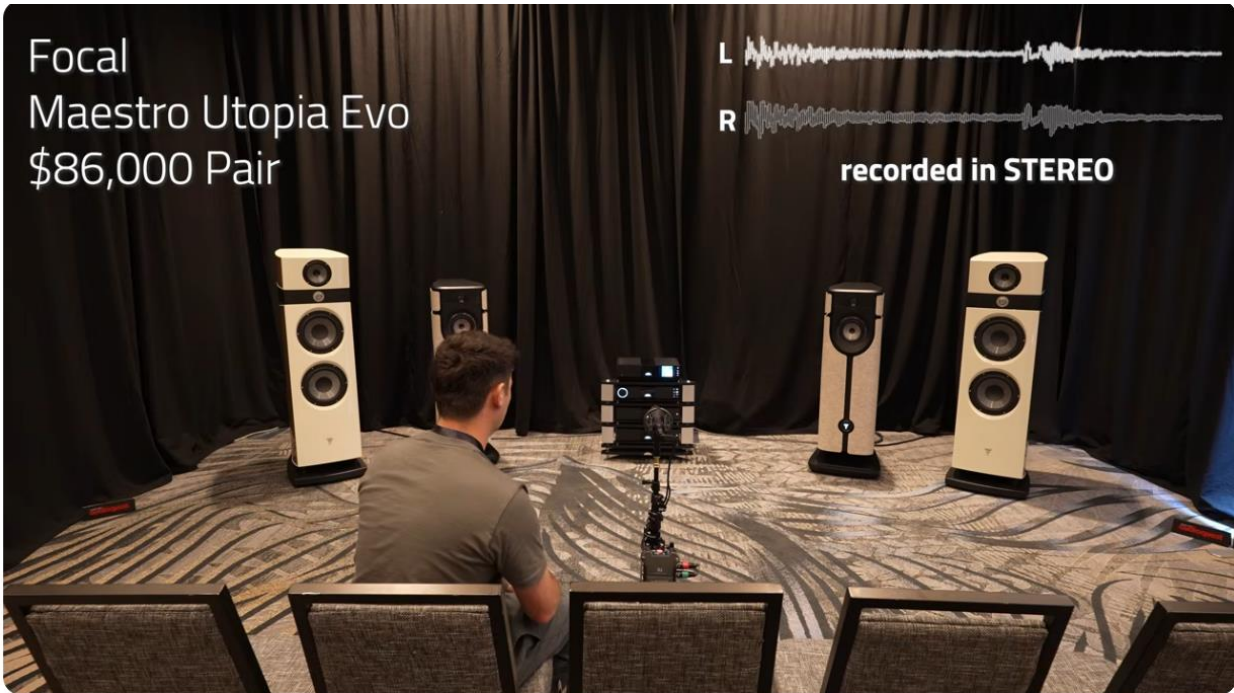
I wish more attendees would invest in an Audio-Technica BP4025 stereo microphone to capture the pristine sound at these High-End Audio Shows. The camera microphone cannot do justice.

One YouTuber went the extra mile to compare the sounds from 21 different systems at AXPONA using his Audio-Technica BP4025 stereo microphone.



It is worth watching this 19 minute video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kOfbQC6mU0>



I took a Stereo Mic to a VERY EXPENSIVE High End Audio Show



Danny Pops
62.7K subscribers



👍 1.1K

11

🔗 Share

👉 Ask

🔖 Save



Danny broke it down by chapters for ease of navigation:

CHAPTERS:

[0:00](#) what is stereo sound?

[0:44](#) Auer Acoustics Versura V2 \$45K

[1:36](#) Focal Naim Diva Mezza Utopia \$69K

[2:32](#) Marten Coltrane Quintet | Goldmund \$260K

[3:16](#) Devialet Phantom Ultimate \$3.8K

[3:59](#) IsoAcoustics Demo

[4:53](#) Cambridge Audio L/R S \$595

[5:40](#) YG Acoustics Titan \$910K

[6:48](#) Wynn Audio Avalos \$230K

[7:58](#) Focal Naim Maestro \$86K

[9:14](#) T+A Solitaire S540 \$76.9K

[10:18](#) Guader Akustik DARC 240 \$189K

- [11:17](#) Sonus Faber Amati \$78K
- [12:16](#) Magico S7 \$135K
- [13:15](#) PS Audio FR5 \$4K
- [14:11](#) Stenheim Ultime Two \$179K
- [14:58](#) KEF Blade One Meta \$35K
- [15:24](#) Western Acoustics 2.1 \$6K
- [16:21](#) SVS Ultra Evo Pinnacle \$5K
- [16:50](#) Yamaha NS-2000A \$6K
- [17:33](#) Emotiva Nostala LB12 \$3K
- [18:19](#) MBL 101 E MKII \$91K
- [19:04](#) Outro

The cost of the speakers in this comparison ranges from \$3K to \$910K a pair.

The Yamaha NS-2000A sounded pretty good at the lower end of the price spectrum at \$6K a pair.

The world's largest [High-End Audio Show](#) is coming up in Vienna on June 4-7, 2026.

The image shows a promotional banner for the 'PREMIERE HIGH END VIENNA 2026' event, held from June 4 to 7, 2026. The banner features a purple and white color scheme with a stylized audio waveform graphic. Below the banner is a navigation menu with five items: VISITORS, EXHIBITORS, PRESS, CONTACT, and TRAVEL SERVICE. Underneath the menu is a statistics section with five purple boxes, each containing a large number and a label: 500 EXHIBITORS, 1,000 BRANDS, 30,000 SQM SPACE, 22,000 VISITORS, and 580 JOURNALISTS.

Category	Count
Exhibitors	500
Brands	1,000
SQM Space	30,000
Visitors	22,000
Journalists	580

Look out for Kazuya's [YouTube Channel](#) . He will bring you the most comprehensive coverage.

Best regards,

David Das